

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 20, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

As you know, since the fall of Saddam Hussein, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens of Iraq have become more susceptible to discrimination and violence. However, over the last month, there have been alarming testimonies that have brought to light human rights violations that fundamentally threaten the safety of LGBT Iraqis. Reports of the harassment, detention and execution of LGBT Iraqis by Iraqi law enforcement have intensified, stressing the urgency of putting an end to continued persecution.

We have derived this information from testimonials of gay and transgender Iraqi men that were detained, tortured and sentenced to death for being members of an allegedly forbidden organization in Iraq called Iraqi LGBT. Some of these individuals were able to escape, while others have been reportedly executed by Iraqi Ministry of Interior Security Forces. Through conversations with organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, it has become clear that these are not isolated reports, but instead, accurately portray an aggressive campaign to locate, arrest and execute LGBT Iraqis in and around Baghdad.

We were obviously disturbed and shocked at allegations that the Ministry of the Interior Security Forces may be involved in the mass persecution and execution of gay and transgender Iraqis. While the execution of LGBT Iraqis may not be approved at the highest levels of government, the persecution of Iraqis because of their sexual orientation or gender identity is unacceptable regardless of whether these policies are extrajudicial or state-sanctioned. Given the close nature of the relationship between the United States and Iraqi governments, we feel it is imperative that the U.S. government take these allegations seriously and work with the Iraqi government to address this urgent humanitarian crisis.

This March, President Obama called on the United States to join 66 other countries in condemning human-rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity through the signing of the United Nations declaration. We are equally grateful to you for continuing to speak out about the importance of combating the persecution and discrimination of gays, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals here in the United States and throughout the world. This crisis only further highlights the crucial role of the U.S. government and U.S. State Department in protecting the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals throughout the world.

Given your longstanding support of LGBT rights, we are reaching out to you not only as our Secretary of State, but as a close ally in the struggle to fight for the human rights of vulnerable minorities.

Madam Secretary, we hope that the State Department will prioritize the investigation of these allegations and work with the Iraqi government, human rights organizations and the United Nations to end the executions of LGBT Iraqis and ensure the safety of these individuals that may be afraid of reporting incidences to state authorities, particularly when those instances involve state authorities.

Please know that we will continue to monitor this situation and hope to be of assistance in your investigation. We wish you well in all of your endeavors as Secretary of State and thank you for your service at such a crucial moment for American diplomacy.

Sincerely,

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

Barney Frank
Member of Congress

Robert Wexler
Member of Congress

Eliot Engel
Member of Congress

Luis Gutierrez
Member of Congress

Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress

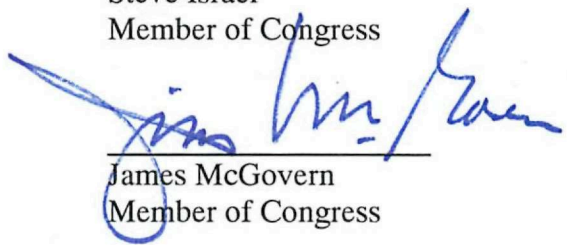
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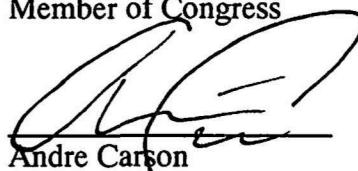
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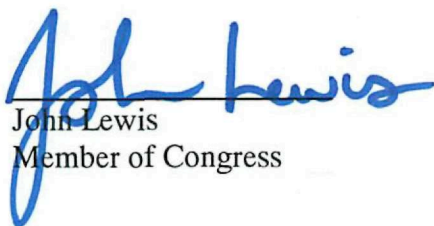
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